



# THE CHEAP EASY

## A Penny Pincher's Guide to New Orleans

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*The Cheap Easy* is designed for those of you who have limited budgets or little time for sightseeing during AALL. This guide covers diversions in New Orleans that are both free (or very cheap) AND convenient. You will find that New Orleans is an inexpensive and accessible place for tourists, even for penny pinchers on a tight schedule.

There are several sections in *The Cheap Easy*: General Tourist Information, The Quarter and Downtown, The Rest of the City, Entertainment and Sustenance, and Voluntourism.

### General Tourist Information

For those traditionalists who are fond of handouts, you will have no trouble finding free **brochures and maps**. Here are some locations where you can browse through the materials on your own or get assistance from an expert:

- Louisiana Welcome Center, at Jackson Square on St. Ann Street (568-5661).
- Convention & Visitors Bureau, in the Garden District at 2020 St. Charles Avenue.
- Hotels: most have brochure racks and many have concierges.

If you are electronically inclined, you can take advantage of the **free WiFi** system while you are in New Orleans. (The free service is a lower-speed, but it is free.) Some of the better **websites** for general tourist information are:

The [Fodor's](#) and [Frommer's](#) sites contain mini-versions of their print guides. These local websites, [Convention & Visitors Bureau](#) and [New Orleans Online](#), also include excellent sections on history, architecture, culture and other background topics.

Check local **newspapers** and their websites for current events and activities. The daily newspaper, *The Times-Picayune*, puts out an entertainment section (*Lagniappe*) on Friday and its website is [Nola.com](#). New Orleans has several free papers that all have websites. [Gambit](#) is a weekly with an emphasis on local news and entertainment; [Where Y'At](#) is a monthly entertainment magazine; and [offBeat](#) focuses on local and regional music.

**Public transportation** on RTA's streetcars and buses is both cheap and easy. The one-day and one-week passes are a bargain if you plan to go sightseeing outside of the Downtown area. A taxicab might be less expensive than you think, since most cab rides are pretty short. **United Cab** (522-9771) has a reputation for the most knowledgeable and reliable drivers. They are the black and white taxis that look a lot like Los Angeles police cars. For more on transportation, go to the [LAC guide](#) and the [RTA](#) websites.

## The Quarter, Downtown and Thereabouts

A **walking tour** of The Quarter is the best possible way to see the oldest part of the city.

- The rangers of the [National Park Service](#) conduct an outstanding guided tour. It's free and better than many of the commercial tours. NPS has two locations in The Quarter, the Visitor Center (419 Decatur Street, 589-2636) and the Jazz Historic National Park (see Entertainment section). They are part of Jean Lafitte National Historical Park and Preserve, which has many locations throughout the region.
- If you prefer to wander around on your own, take the Convention & Visitors Bureau's [self-guided tour](#). You can pick up a print version from any of the brochure racks or download it from the web. Or slow down to a stroll, using "[A New Orleans Flânerie](#)" in the *April Spectrum* as your guide.

The **Louisiana Supreme Court**, 400 Royal Street, is free and open to the public too. But don't bring anything that takes a picture. Go to the Court's [website](#) and check the docket for oral arguments. You can only go in at the beginning and you will be trapped until it's over. If you have not hit library overload, treat yourself to a tour of the Law Library of Louisiana and the Supreme Court Museum while you are there.

If you want a soft drink (or beer, cocktail, bottle of wine, for that matter), go to **Vieux Carre Wines and Spirits**, 422 Chartres Street (at the back door of the Louisiana Supreme Court). Be sure to check out the genuine French Quarter characters who hang around the table in the front. Prices are reasonable, and the beer selection is excellent.

After your refreshing beverage, head over to **The Historic New Orleans Collection** at . The Historic Collection is a great introduction to the Crescent City, and it isn't just for history buffs. The collection and exhibits cover all aspects of the art, culture, people and events that make up the city's history. Real cheapskates can take a free self-guided tour, but the guided tour is only \$5. Most exhibits and presentations are free. You will find a better description of The Historic Collection, current exhibits, and the Research Center on the [website](#).

People watching is a favorite local activity that tourists can enjoy with little or no training. Sit on a bench in **Jackson Square** and you can look at the amazing variety of humanity walking by. Or you can find a bench by the river on the **Moon Walk** or **Woldenberg Park** to watch the ships and barges go by. The **Port** of New Orleans is at the center of the world's busiest shipping complex, and it's fascinating to watch. Check out the Port's [website](#) and [webcam](#) for details and virtual viewing.

For more advanced people watching, you will find **street performers** around Jackson Square and throughout the French Market. There are musicians of all sorts, dancers and acrobats, puppeteers, and the obligatory mimes. But beware the balloon clown, he can be very grumpy at times.

When you get tired of watching other characters, put on your own performance. Entertain

your friends and family by recording your performance on one of the **NOLA.com webcams**. There are several locations Downtown and one on St. Charles Avenue.

Take a ride on the Mississippi. On the **Canal Street Ferry**, you can see the river from the observation deck or experience it up close on the bow. Board the ferry at the foot of Canal next to the Aquarium, and you will end up in Algiers Point on the West Bank (home of Mardi Gras World, but it's not free). Some people take the ferry just for the magnificent view of The Quarter on the return trip. Free for pedestrians and \$1 for cars (on the return only).

**Shopping Without Spending.** You probably didn't expect to see shopping suggestions in *The Cheap Easy*, but there are stores where you can go purely for entertainment.

- Even if you don't like to shop, you can still amuse yourself in the **Flea Market** at the Esplanade end of the French Market.
- For more sophisticated tastes, [A Gallery for Fine Photography](#) at 241 Chartres has photographs and books by photography pioneers as well as contemporary masters.
- Or you can browse through the contemporary art, crafts, and jewelry at **RHINO** (Right Here in New Orleans) in Canal Place, 523-7945.
- At [New Orleans Glassworks and Printmaking Studio](#), you can watch the artists at work, attend free demonstrations, or rove around the gallery and the shop. Located in the Warehouse District at 727 Magazine Street.
- Booklovers can wander through the three floors and over 50,000 titles of rare and second-hand books, prints, records, and piano rolls in [Beckham's Bookshop](#) at 228 Decatur.

### The Rest of the City

If you have time to venture into other parts of the city, *The Cheap Easy* has a few recommendations:

A **streetcar ride** is a rite of passage for every tourist visiting the Crescent City, and for good reason. It is a very New Orleans experience. For only \$1.25, you get to see the same sights as the generic tours and you get to ride on a National Historic Monument at the same time. You can take a streetcar along the Riverwalk or out Canal Street to the cemeteries, City Park and the Museum. (There are two Canal lines, which will make sense when you see the routes.) The St. Charles line will not be operating in time for AALL but you can take a bus along the same route through the Garden District, Uptown and Carrollton. More information on [streetcars](#) or [RTA](#) routes.

The Canal streetcar, or a short cab ride, will get you to **City Park** in Mid-City. The Park is still recovering from Katrina, but it is beautiful and most of the venues are open. With 1300 acres and dozens of attractions, the Park has something for everyone. City Park is where you'll find an outdoor sculpture garden, playgrounds and rides, 600-year-old oak trees, botanical gardens, trails, trains, concerts, horses, and lagoons. All of that and the **New Orleans Museum of Art** too. Much is cheap if not free. Details on the [website](#).

**The Cemeteries.** You can visit the cemeteries for free. But don't go into the oldest ones in back of The Quarter (**St. Louis No. 1 and No. 2**) without a guide, because they can be dangerous. There are tours conducted by local guides and by national companies. *The Cheap Easy* recommends the tours of St. Louis No. 1 and Lafayette by [Save Our Cemeteries](#). Although they are technically free, there is a “suggested donation” that goes toward the preservation and restoration of the city’s cemeteries.

Besides St. Louis No. 1 and 2, there are at least 40 other cemeteries in New Orleans. These **websites**: [Save Our Cemeteries](#), [Yatcom](#), and the [About.com guide](#) will tell you more about our cemeteries and their history. These will probably be the easiest to find:

- You can safely go by yourself to **St. Louis No. 3**, on Esplanade Avenue near City Park. Take a cab or the Canal Street streetcar to City Park, then walk across Bayou St. John and St. Louis No. 3 will be on your left. For that matter, take a walk along the Bayou. It’s safe and pretty, with beautiful houses on both sides.
- Or take the other Canal streetcar, the one marked “Cemeteries,” to the end of the line. When you get off, you will find: **Metairie, Cypress Grove, Odd Fellows Rest, Greenwood, St. Patrick's No. 1 and 2**, all at the foot of Canal Street. You could also take a taxi.
- If that's not enough, **Holt Cemetery** is a municipal cemetery where all upkeep is done by the family members. Buddy Bolden, the legendary father of jazz, is in there somewhere. Holt is near the cemeteries at the end of Canal Street, an easy walk down City Park Avenue. It's behind Delgado Community College on Buddy Bolden Place.
- **Lafayette Cemetery** is in the Garden District, on the corner of Prytania and Washington Avenue. It’s across the street from Commander’s Palace, the famous turquoise-colored restaurant that is NOT cheap. You can wander around Lafayette on your own or take a tour.

**Shopping Without Spending, Part II.** There are six miles of shops along Magazine Street, which stretches from Canal Street downtown to the Zoo uptown. You will find all kinds of shops to wander through, from elegant to funky and downright tacky. Oh, and there are restaurants too. You can learn more from the [Merchants Association](#) and the [About.com guide](#). Take the Magazine bus; serious shoppers should buy a pass so they can make multiple stops.

The 1884-85 World's Industrial and Cotton Centennial Exposition was a financial disaster, but it gave us what is now [Audubon Park and Audubon Zoo](#). Located Uptown, they cover 340 acres between St. Charles Avenue and the river. You can get there by taking the St. Charles bus to the entrance of the Park. Or take the Magazine bus to the end of the line, which will put you on the backside of the Park and near the entrance to the Zoo.

- A traffic-free road loops through the **Audubon Park**, around the lagoon and golf course. It’s perfect for a leisurely stroll or, if you insist, more vigorous forms of exercise. Other recreational facilities include: playgrounds, picnic areas, tennis courts,

a golf course, horseback riding, and ducks eager to be fed. After all of that activity, relax with an iced tea or cold drink on the porch of the Golf Course Clubhouse (just off of Magazine). The view is magnificent but the food is boring at best, so just order something to drink.

- **Audubon Zoo** is nationally ranked, and it has received international recognition for its natural habitat exhibits. Since it is hot and humid here, most of the [exhibits](#) feature animals and plants from warm climates. You won't find any panting polar bears, but you will find an "albino" alligator in the Louisiana Swamp exhibit. Admission to the Zoo is not free but it's a bargain (\$12 for adults and \$7 for children).

If you still need more exercise, walk around **Tulane** and **Loyola Universities**. Both schools face St. Charles Avenue, just across the street from the Park entrance. Tulane is home of the [Amistad Research Center](#), which is the country's largest independent archives of ethnic heritage and African-American history. Check the website for information about the Amistad and free tours. If you are going through law library withdrawal, give yourself a [tour](#) of the **law school libraries** at Tulane (on Freret Street) or Loyola (on Pine Street, several blocks further down St. Charles).

## Entertainment and Sustenance

**Entertainment.** It is easy to find cheap and inexpensive entertainment in New Orleans. Just check the local newspapers and their websites, especially *Where Y'at* and *offBeat*, which are listed in the General Tourist Information section. Here are some diversions that are absolutely free:

The [Jazz Historic National Park](#) offers free jazz concerts on Saturdays and piano concerts on Wednesdays. The National Park Service rangers also conduct a variety of programs, many for children. Check the website for programs and directions.

Listen to **WWOZ** 90.7FM so you'll have an idea of what you want to hear when you get here. This local favorite plays New Orleans music and jazz plus some Latin, Brazilian, blues, and big band. Or go to the [website](#) and listen to shows, live broadcasts and more.

Nola.com's [NOLA Radio](#) is a new music website with seven channels of local and regional music. This site also carries reviews, interviews, and song clips.

If you want to hear good live music, avoid touristy Bourbon Street and head to **Frenchmen Street** in the Faubourg Marigny. (The Marigny is an historic neighborhood on the other side of Esplanade Avenue from The Quarter.) The Marigny offers all kinds of music: jazz, blues, Latin, reggae and more. You'll find live music in restaurants, clubs and bars. The music is free with your meal or drink(s) at some, but others impose a cover charge.

**Sustenance.** You can eat (and drink) very well on a budget in New Orleans, and you will find information on cheap eats in the standard resources. So, *The Cheap Easy* covers only a few local delicacies that are really really cheap.

- You probably already know to get coffee and doughnuts (beignets) at [Café du Monde](#) on Jackson Square and the Riverwalk, but you may not know that....The iced coffee is just as good as the café au lait, especially in the summer. Beignets are only good when they are warm and fresh; they do not reheat well. For stronger coffee, order your café au lait “dark.”
- You may know about [Lucky Dogs](#) too. New Orleans does not have the same reputation for hot dogs as Chicago, but our Lucky Dogs have been recognized by *Time* and *Rolling Stone*. (They also made an appearance as Paradise weenies in *Confederacy of Dunces*, the Pulitzer Prize-winning novel about New Orleans and its characters.) Best eaten when you are very hungry or it’s very late. You will find the distinctive Lucky Dog carts all over The Quarter.
- And then there are **snowballs**. This local delicacy is readily distinguished from the lowly snow cone by the finely shaved ice and the variety of flavors. They even come in sugar-free. More popular alternatives are snowballs stuffed with ice cream or drizzled with evaporated milk. You can find good snowball stands in any neighborhood in the city, except the Downtown area. Just ask a local for a recommendation.
- Another local delicacy is [Hubig’s Pies](#). These pies are usually described as fried turnovers, but that description does not do them justice. They are made fresh daily and come in an assortment of fillings. You will find them all over town--in places you would expect (like grocery and convenience stores) and unexpected places too (like hardware stores).
- If you head uptown, look for a cart labeled “**Roman Candy**” drawn by a mule named Patsy. The taffy comes in long sticks and three flavors--chocolate, strawberry and vanilla. It’s only 75¢ a stick, so you can try them all. Meet [Ron Kotteman](#), who is the third-generation taffy man.

It will come as no surprise that New Orleans has a popular radio show called “**The Food Show**,” hosted by Tom Fitzmorris. (Check [WWL](#)’s website for listings.) Fitzmorris also has a wonderful website, [N. O. Menu](#). Both the radio show and the website cover anything and everything remotely related to food. If you’re in the mood for liquid refreshment, this [Cheap Drinks](#) site is a great bar guide and not just because the drinks are cheap. Don’t forget to check the local papers and their websites for information on eating and drinking.

### Voluntourism

Be a voluntourist and help with the disaster recovery. It is CHEAP and EASY too. There is a wide variety of projects and activities to choose from. So, whatever your interests and your skills, you’ll find an organization that is thrilled to have you.

The simplest way to volunteer is to sign up for one of the service projects sponsored by [AALL](#). For more choices, check out the many **websites** and forums that post volunteer opportunities. Here are a few: [Convention & Visitors Bureau](#), [Volunteer Louisiana](#), and

[Volunteer Match](#). Or just ask a local to suggest an activity or organization that suits your interests. If you'd like to read to frightened dogs for example, contact Marie Erickson at [Merickson@LASC.ORG](mailto:Merickson@LASC.ORG). Marie will post more suggestions and information on the blog, The AALL Second Line.